



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 108<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

## House of Representatives

### GUARDSMEN AND RESERVISTS FINANCIAL RELIEF ACT

#### HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 21, 2004*

Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation we are considering today is the absolute height of hypocrisy. H.R. 1779, the so-called Guardsmen and Reservists Financial Relief Act, is a sham, and it is an outrage. We are calling up members of our National Guard and Reserves, pulling them out of their regular employment, taking them away from their homes and families and communities, and asking them to risk their lives in the fight against terrorism in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. And what does the Republican leadership of this House propose to do in order to help them face the financial strain this call-up imposes on them and their families as they risk their lives for our Nation? This legislation provides the tiniest of tiny benefits. The bill allows the waiver of the early withdrawal fees as reservists and National Guardsmen and women use their own retirement savings, their own IRAs, in order to meet their urgent financial needs caused by their activation to serve our Nation.

This bill still requires that these brave men and women pay taxes on the money they withdraw. This

means that a reservist in the 25 percent tax bracket would have to withdraw \$10,000 from his own IRA in order to meet expenses of \$7,500.

Instead of considering serious and substantive Democratic proposals to help those who risk their lives for all Americans, the leadership of this House continues to adopt grandly titled legislation which does little or nothing. At the same time, the Republican leadership continues to press for the top White House domestic priority, another tax cut for the wealthiest Americans.

Where is the shared sacrifice? Where is the effort to balance what all Americans are being asked to sacrifice as we fight the war on terrorism? Tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, minute waivers of fees on early withdrawals for soldiers fighting and dying in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I cannot understand how the leadership of this House can shamelessly bring this tepid legislation to the floor and claim it benefits members of the Reserves and National Guard.

Months ago, Madam Speaker, I introduced H.R. 1345, bipartisan

legislation supported by 80 Members of this body, that would provide real relief to the more than 40 percent of the National Guard and Reserves who suffer serious financial hardship when they are activated to serve our Nation. There are currently 170,000 Reservists and National Guardsmen activated to fight the war on terrorism, which means that 70,000 of them are attempting to get by on drastically reduced salaries.

Madam Speaker, the time has come to provide real assistance to these families. I challenge the Republican majority in this House to take meaningful action that will truly benefit the soldiers in our Reserve and National Guard units. It is time to stop playing with sham legislation like this bill that we are considering today.